

Life as a Blacksmith in Colonial America

Name _____

The Blacksmith was an essential merchant and craftsman in a colonial town. He made indispensable items such as horseshoes, pots, pans, and nails. Blacksmiths (sometimes called ferriers) made numerous goods for farmers including axes, plowshares, cowbells, and hoes. They also made hammers, candleholders, tools, files, locks, fireplace racks, and anvils. Most of the blacksmith's work was done in his personal forge in which scalding bars of iron were hammered with heavy sledges to fashion the iron into various shapes.

The road to becoming a successful blacksmith was long and hard. Apprenticeships started at age 14 or 15 and could last up to seven years. At first, an apprentice would simply observe his master before helping with easy tasks. Eventually, the apprentice would learn more complicated tasks like heating and bending iron. Finally, the apprentice would be tasked with fashioning some kind of metal "master piece" that would be judged by his master. If the piece was adequate, the apprentice would pass his apprenticeship and became a journeyman – a traveling blacksmith who would repair metal goods in nearby villages. If all went well, the journeyman would have earned enough money through his work to open his own shop.

1. What was a ferrier?

- A. The passage doesn't tell.
- B. Someone who made metal goods.
- C. Someone who observed and helped his master for seven years.
- D. Someone who traveled to different towns.

2. An apprentice could become a traveling blacksmith when...

- A. he learned to heat iron.
- B. he learned to bend iron.
- C. he learned complicated tasks.
- D. he created a masterpiece approved by his master.

3. What does “indispensable” mean as used in the following sentence:

He made indispensable items such as horseshoes, pots, pans, and nails.

- A. Important
- B. Essential
- C. Interesting
- D. Expensive

4. “Seven years” could be the answer to what question?

- A. How long did it take a “masterpiece” to be judged?
- B. At what age could a blacksmith apprenticeship begin?
- C. How long was a blacksmith apprenticeship?
- D. How many years did a journeyman have to travel?

5. Why did an apprentice first become a journeyman?

- A. To gain experience and culture in different colonies.
- B. To gain experience in different forges.
- C. To gain experience crafting different tools.
- D. Because he needed to earn and save money to open his own shop.

6. Which of the following would be unlikely during an apprenticeship?

- A. An apprentice working at his own personal forge.
- B. An apprentice observing his master.
- C. An apprentice helping his master with basic tasks.
- D. An apprentice heating and bending iron.

7. Which was NOT an item used by a blacksmith?

- A. Plowshares
- B. Iron Bars
- C. Sledges
- D. Fire